

MEMORANDUM FOR: Members of the T&W Working Group

Attached is [] contribution as requested at our last meeting.

It is unclear whether I will have to be in court Tuesday afternoon. If so, I will reschedule the meeting for 1400 on Thursday, 11 May, and notify you soonest.

[]
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Attachment

Date 8 May 1978

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Strategic Warning Staff

Washington, D.C. 20301

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Big "W" and Small "W"

1. There are no inherent differences between strategic warning and warning in terms of the techniques and methods required for performing these missions. Distinctions between these two categories of warning that were made in the past (for example, in DCID 1/5 in 1975) rested primarily on judgments of (a) priorities (the most serious potential and likely military threats to US security and interests), and (b) the capacities and limitations of specific national-level warning mechanisms.

2. In the present review of warning and crisis management arrangements, the central issue would seem to be a determination of the nature and range of potential threats and crises that most likely will require national-level warning judgments over the next five to ten years. Is the community consensus of 1974-75 that the principal problem and focus should be Strategic Warning still valid, or should this definition of priorities and primary mission be revised to conform to a new and different perception of the most probable range of threats and crises in the foreseeable future? In an era of detente relationships between the US, on the one

hand, and the USSR and China, on the other, a plausible case could be made that although strategic warning must remain the ultimate requirement, the principal warning problems on the US agenda in the foreseeable future probably will not focus on potential military confrontations between the great powers but rather on lesser conflicts, tensions, and crises elsewhere. Some of these "lesser" warning situations, of course, will involve dangers of escalation to strategic warning situations.

3. If a determination is made that the present national-level mission should no longer be confined exclusively to strategic warning, and that the mission defined by DCID 1/5 does not adequately address the most likely developments of potential warning significance, the central problems will be (a) how to define and delimit a broader mission that covers both small "W" and a wide range of non-military threats, and (b) what mechanisms and procedures should be established to perform this expanded mission.

4. It seems to me that in considering answers to these problems, greater and more careful attention should be given to functions and procedures than to "mechanisms." The correct answer to the question posed in III A. of Mr. Lehman's Working Paper -- is the provision of warning of all kinds a line responsibility? -- should, in my view, be a loud and clear "yes."

The preoccupation with warning mechanisms in the past has confused and blurred the fundamental problems and dilemmas of effective warning. The notion that the principal, if not exclusive, responsibility for strategic warning should be (or has been) vested in a single entity (the Watch Committee or the Special Assistant and the Strategic Warning Staff) has tended not only to place unrealistic and imprudent reliance on the prescience and capacities of these bodies but also to blur and dilute the warning responsibilities of the production offices and senior managers of NFIB agencies.

5. Much of the discussion about warning at the national level and the concern expressed about the adequacy of the arrangements for strategic warning created by DCID 1/5 reflect misunderstanding and confusion with respect to the intent and expectations of this directive. It did not envisage that the Special Assistant and the SWS would be the sole or exclusive authority for strategic warning. On the contrary, the directive contemplated that strategic warning would be a shared community responsibility. The SWS was conceived as serving essentially a staff, research, and supporting function and as an adjunct and supplement to the DCI, NFIB production offices and the NIO system in meeting their strategic warning responsibilities.

6. This concept that warning is a broadly shared community responsibility will assume even greater importance if Small "W" is to be accorded higher priority and national-level attention in the future. In view of the formidable range of subjects, areas, and events that will have to be covered, procedures and functions of warning analysis will have to be given more thoughtful attention than organizational mechanisms. No single entity or mechanism would be even remotely capable of performing this world-wide mission in a systematic and effective manner. The sheer volume of material and range of subjects would seem to rule out the option of a separate organization for warning. Line responsibility would be the only feasible course.

7. Line responsibility, however, would raise almost as many thorny problems and potential hazards as a separate organization. In view of the prevailing structure of, and the division of labor in, the intelligence community, responsibility for the provision of warning of all kinds would necessarily fall primarily on current intelligence analysts. Long experience has underscored the difficulties and hazards in combining current and warning functions in the same corps of analysts. Training, exhortation, and constant attention by senior management would have some positive effect in increasing warning

sensitivity among current intelligence analysts. But the nature, pressures, and conflicting demands of the current mission are such that it would be asking too much of the analyst corps to expect them to meet the rigorous and time-consuming requirements of systematic and effective warning. Some additional safeguards, insurance, assistance, and support would be necessary.

8. The safeguard/insurance function should be performed by a relatively small interagency staff of trained and experienced specialists in warning intelligence. Warning, to some extent, is a separate and distinct intelligence discipline. It is not so much that warning skills, techniques, and methods are unique; it is more a matter of a systematic and disciplined evaluation and meticulous reconstruction of trends, information and events, drawing upon the lessons of past warning failures and applying these lessons in a self-conscious way to contemporary problems.

9. This staff of warning specialists would function primarily as "second-look" analysts, as consultants and advisers to line analysts, and as researchers into specific warning problems. These specialists would focus on those areas where experience has shown deficiencies in threat perception and the warning process. Their functions would include:

- a. Study of foreign perceptions and misperceptions of the distribution of power, opportunities for political or military gains, and calculations of risk.
- b. Examination of contingencies and options as perceived by foreign actors.
- c. Examination of assumptions and preconceptions underlying threat perceptions contained in finished intelligence publications.
- d. Identification of perceptions and assessments that seem to require revision in the light of recent events or changes in variable conditions. Are threats being over-estimated or under-estimated?
- e. Examination of possible areas of unexpected behavior, actions or accidents.
- f. Study of discrepant information or events which may not have received sufficient attention or analysis -- as a safeguard against the "trap or preconception," hardening of assumptions, and "cognitive closure."
- g. Preparation of "worst-case" warning assessments when the community seems to be face with particularly ambiguous situations and when incoming

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reports on foreign intentions are conflicting and the possibility or risks or surprise appears to be increasing.

10. The safeguard staff should have closer and more regular contacts with NFIB production offices than has been possible under the SWS arrangement. The logic of the present institutional structures under the DCI, and of the functions proposed in paragraph 9, suggest that the safeguard staff should be subordinate to NFAC and, if possible, be located in CIA Headquarters. NFAC would provide general and specific guidance to the staff, and proposals or initiatives by the staff would be reviewed and authorized by NFAC. Members of the staff would provide a warning perspective and leavening by participating in interagency groups drafting national estimates, Alert Memoranda, and various intelligence studies.



Director

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